

**Sabbath School Lesson**  
At  
**Soul-winning Camp Meeting**  
at Nkonsia, near Wenchi, B/A  
(Sept. 2-4, 2011)

**The Coming Salvation and Judgment of God:**  
**The Ultimate 'Big' Reason to Keep the Sabbath**

*Introduction*

Yes, here's the ultimate 'big' reason to observe God's Sabbath in this end time. The seventh-day Sabbath is arguably the most misunderstood and disliked commandment among all the laws of God. And every excuse has been invented by men to avoid keeping it. It has been dismissed as 'nailed to the cross', as a yoke, and as an old Jewish relic of no relevance in the modern world.

In the face of man's gross disdain for the Sabbath, however, God positively affirms it throughout scripture. He calls it "My holy day" and promises great rewards to those who observe it with delight and respect (Isa. 58:13-14). By it, He sets apart His chosen ones by a perpetual covenant where the Sabbath is "a sign" between God and His people "forever" (Ex. 31:13, 16-17; Ez. 20:12).

But above all, God affirms the Sabbath as required to be kept up to the very time of the end when His salvation will be "revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). This is the thrust of the Divine prophetic message communicated through the prophet Isaiah in Isa. 56: 'Observe My Sabbath along with righteousness and justice when My salvation is near to come and My righteousness to be revealed' (v. 1).

If you believe the other prophecies of Isaiah concerning Jesus the Messiah, such as His virgin birth (7:14), His suffering (53), and His Messianic rule (9:6-7), you cannot in all honesty dismiss the one that says the Sabbath ought to be kept particularly in the run-up to His return. All the prophecies of Isaiah stand or fall together.

Jesus, "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8), is still the Lord of the Sabbath. He never changes (Mal. 3:6). He made the Sabbath for you (Mark 2:27-28). And He expects you to keep His Sabbath together with the rest of His commandments written in your heart (Heb. 8:10-11; Isa. 51:7). The Sabbath remains for the people (Heb. 4:9). Observe it especially at this time of the end, for "My salvation is about to come", says the LORD, and "My righteousness about to be revealed".

May “the God of all grace” help us all to heed His voice calling us to true faith and righteousness which includes the observance of His Holy Sabbath. God bless you all in Jesus’ Name. Amen!

*- Pastor Enoch Ofori Inr*

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### **Isaiah 56: A Prophetic Call to Sabbath Observance in the New Testament Era**

Isaiah chapter 56 contains a prophetic call to end-time Sabbath observance to not just the Jews but curiously to Gentile believers at a time when God’s “salvation is near to come” and His “righteousness about to be revealed” (v. 1).

The chapter’s call to Sabbath observance, as a whole, fits squarely into the overall prophetic message of the prophet Isaiah, who has famously been called ‘the evangelical prophet’. Of all the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah foretold the gospel events (of the virgin birth, suffering and death of the Messiah, 7:14, 53:3-9) with such precision that one would think he were an eye-witness. He truly preached the gospel ahead of his time (53:1), down to the contents of the Messiah’s message: “He will magnify the law and make it honourable” (Isa. 42:21).

Contrary to the position of apostate Christianity that Christ came to do away with the law of God, Isaiah unequivocally affirmed: “the isles shall wait for His law” (Isa. 42:4). Thus, in fulfillment of Isaiah’s Messianic prophecies, Christ made His position on the law of God clear: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17 *NASB Update, NASU*). He then went on to explain (in verses 21-48) how the law must be obeyed in the spirit of its deeper meaning.

In Isaiah’s prophetic schedule of the Messiah’s salvation work, after the Messiah sends forth God’s law to all nations during the Gospel Age (Isa. 8:16; Matt. 28:19-20; Isa. 2:2-3; Luke 24:27), He will establish world peace in the Millennium (Isa. 2:4; 1 Cor. 15:24).

### **The Sabbath, a Key Theme of His Messianic Message**

With regard to the prophetic timing of Isaiah 56, Isaiah chapter 55 shows that it’s set in the time of the New Testament ministry of Christ in which He will satisfy the spiritually hungry (55:1-3; compare John 6:27, 7:37-39) including Gentile nations that did not know Him (55:4-5).

In verses 6-7, the wicked is asked to call upon the LORD and forsake his evil way and thoughts in return for God's abundant pardon.

Even though it might seem incredible that God will pardon us after all our rebellion and wickedness, God says He will abundantly pardon us because "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways" (vv. 8-9). This is also because the Word He has sent calling on us to repent comes not in vain. If only we will obey His word, we will experience the power and blessing of His Word; joy, peace and prosperity will be ours time without end (vv. 10-13).

Then, in chapter 56, as part of our general return to Him through repentance and faith in Christ, God names the Sabbath as a specific "judgment" or righteous act of His to do. And He is insistent that Gentile believers keep the Sabbath together with His people Israel. He declares:

"Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for My salvation *is* near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed.

"Blessed *is* the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

"Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree.

"For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please Me, and take hold of My covenant;

"Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

"Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant;

"Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

"The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him" (Isa. 56:1-8).

The word "judgment" in verse 1 (KJV) comes from the Hebrew word 'mishpat' (Strong's #4941) which mostly, but not always, means "judgment or a legal decision". In another sense, however, 'mishpat' as used in the specific case of Isa. 56 could mean "divine law" or doing what is right, as also used in Gen. 18:19.

In a similar vein, the word "justice", in Hebrew 'tsedaqah' (Strong's 6666), primarily means "righteousness, blameless conduct, and integrity. The noun describes justice, right actions, and right attitudes, as expected from both God and people when they judge". But in another closely related sense (nuance) of the word, 'tsedaqah' "describes the attitude and actions God had and expected His people to maintain" (Strong's Complete Word Study Concordance AMG, pp. 1912, 1953).

Thus the message of Isaiah 56 is that the Sabbath is one of the righteous acts of God which all believers must observe as His salvation, which reveals His righteousness (or justice), draws near. And it's a specific message to you and me that as God's Eternal Rest beckons, we are to grasp the Sabbath with both hands to secure our eternal future in God's Eternal Rest!

**The Sabbath is to be *Observed* as an Integral Part of God's Righteousness**

The call to do righteousness, of which the Sabbath is an integral element, is not in the passive voice; it's in the active: "keep" and "do". It's taken up in verse 2 as "Blessed is the man that DOETH this, ... that KEEPETH the Sabbath from polluting it". And the reason is that "My salvation is near to come" and "My righteousness is to be revealed" (v. 1).

Note, the clause "My salvation is near to come" indicates that Isaiah 56 is a message for the 'last days' in which the Saviour's return is scheduled to occur (Acts 2:17-21; 1Pet. 1:5). In their introduction to the chapter, the authors of the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary* give the following heading: "The Preparation needed on the part of those who wish to be admitted to the kingdom of God". They go on to explain that just as John the Baptist preached "a return to righteousness as needed to prepare men before the Messiah's first coming (Luke 3:3, 8-14), so it shall be before the second coming (Mal. 4:4-5)" (p. 582).

It's on this occasion when Christ sits as Judge that "the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13, 16; 2 Cor. 5:10).

### **The Proper Way to Observe the Sabbath**

In recommending the manner in which the Sabbath should be observed, the tone the LORD uses is one of emphasis: The Sabbath is to be 'done', 'laid hold on' and 'kept' to avoid polluting it (v. 2). The phrase "layeth hold on it" is an "image from one grasping firmly some precious object which he is afraid of having forcibly snatched from him" (ibid. p. 582).

To you Sabbath-keepers, do you sometimes feel pressured to give up the Sabbath because your relatives, friends and co-workers don't see eye to eye with you on it? The message is, 'grip it firmly, or will lose it together with its blessings'. You must obey God rather than your fellow human beings who can't save you (Acts 4:12).

Far from 'polluting' (i.e. 'profaning or desecrating ') it, the Sabbath is to be observed jointly with the activity of keeping one's hands off all evil (v. 2b). What this clearly means is that, without the observance of the Sabbath, the practice of righteousness is not complete.

The full force and implications of keeping oneself from profaning the Sabbath is found in Isaiah 58:

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:  
"Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (vv. 13-14).

Our attitude towards the Sabbath should be one of reverence and delight. It is God's "holy day", and we are to "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable". But beyond words come action: We should honour the LORD on His holy Sabbath day by desisting from our own ways (i.e. usual social routine or business transactions corresponding to 'turning away thy foot', Neh. 10:31, 13:15, 19) as well as by not pursuing our own pleasures nor speaking our own (idle) words.

Since God claims the Sabbath as His "holy [or set-apart] day", "to take it for pleasure is to rob Him of His own. This is the way in which the Sabbath is mostly broken; it is made a day of carnal pleasure instead of spiritual delight" (ibid. p. 585). The solution is to receive God's spiritual nature by which we are enabled to call to Sabbath "a delight, holy of the LORD and honourable" *as He does*. (See

Rom. 8:7-8, 7:15-16, 22; Eph. 5:1). In return, God will give us delight in Himself (Job 22:21-26; Ps 37:4).

### **Universal Sabbath Observance in the New Testament**

Those to whom the divine call to Sabbath observance is directed are all mankind, identified as “man” and “the son of man” (v.2). This agrees with Mark 2:27 where the Greek term “anthropos” (Strong’s #444) is used twice in a generic sense to refer to both men and women, thus to people in general.

It’s therefore not surprising that the Hebrew word for “man” in the text is “enosh” (Strong’s #582) describing a man of humble status. This is distinct from the other Hebrew words for man used elsewhere in scripture, such as “ish” (Strong’s #120) describing a man of high rank or “adam” describing a male or mankind in general. Thus the idea conveyed is that even the humblest of mankind like “the stranger” and “the eunuch” are welcome to observe God’s Holy Sabbath (see verses 4&6).

Note, the word ‘Jew’ is conspicuously absent because in the Gospel Age, in which the command to universal Sabbath observance is to take effect, the gospel will have gone to all nations, not just the Jews (Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; see also Acts 13:42-44, 15:21).

The reason why Gentile believers (described as “the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the LORD”) are specifically mentioned as required to keep the Sabbath along with eunuchs (castrated men, see Deut. 23:1) is that they have now been made one with the house of Israel through the preaching of the Gospel (John 12:32; Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:10-11).

Take note again, these believers are not to be confused with the Gentile proselytes and semi-proselytes of O.T. Judaism labeled “God-fearers” (Acts 13:16, 10:2) as some interpreters suggest. The time-period of the prophecy itself (with respect to its fulfillment) argues against such possibility as does internal New Testament evidence.

God’s grand call to Gentiles to join themselves to Him was NEVER meant to be fulfilled in the Old Testament but in the New Testament era when the gospel would go forth to all nations starting from Jerusalem (Matt. 24:14; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; cp Isa. 2:2-3). The authors of the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown’s Commentary* remark in spite of themselves: The invitation of strangers and eunuchs to Sabbath observance is “A proof that the Sabbath, in the spirit of its obligation, was to be binding under the Gospel (Isa. 66:23). That gospel times are referred to is PLAIN, from the blessing not being pronounced on the man who observed the sacrificial ritual of the Jewish law” (Emphasis mine, p. 582).

Although the *Brown’s Commentary* (authored by Sunday-keepers) acknowledges the continuing validity and relevance of the Sabbath, it seems to suggest, at the same time, that we may not keep the Sabbath in the N.T. exactly as God commanded, that is by resting and worshipping on the seventh day of the week (Ex. 20:8-11; Lev. 23:3), because apparently any day would do. However, to do so will mean that we cannot know God’s express will for us today from the plain O.T. moral commandments we must still keep today. To go by this reasoning, God’s will for us today will need to be ‘spiritualized’ in some way before we attempt to fulfill it. But the Sabbath stands together with the rest of God’s nine commandments, all of which must be obeyed in the spirit of their deeper intent as well as literally as Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount and in His earthly life. (See Matt. 7:23, 12:12; Luke 4:16). Otherwise, the commandment “thou shalt not kill” could mean something else in the N.T., and we might kill and still be guiltless if we do not violate the spirit of it!

Contrary to the false teaching that God has abolished or changed His Sabbath law, God, who foresaw that the majority of Gentile Christians would be led away from the true Sabbath, says both Gentiles and eunuchs in Christ ought not to make excuses for avoiding Sabbath observance. Namely, "The LORD hath utterly separated me from His people". Or the eunuch, "Behold, I am a dry tree" (v. 3). Both excuses are not valid in the New Testament. A new order has emerged. The new order is that, although Gentiles were formerly "far off" because they were "without Christ", and were "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world", they have been brought [near Israel and Israel's God] by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:11-13). How? By His blood shed for all men (Matt. 26:28; John 3:16, 4:42), Christ "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" consisting in O.T. ceremonial laws and Jewish traditions that separated Jew and Gentile (e.g. Ex. 12:48; Deut. 23:1-3; cp 1 Cor. 7:19) and "made the two into one new man, thus establishing peace. And might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY [Gentiles], AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR [Israelites]" (Eph. 2:14-17 NASU). Hence "both have access to God" through Christ (v. 18).

The "dividing wall" between Jew and Gentile was symbolically concretized in stone in the Jerusalem Temple where Gentiles were confined to the outer court (of the Gentiles) and warned on pain of death not to go beyond the stone wall of partition separating them from the inner courts of Israel (see Acts 21:28-29; Rev. 11:2). But Christ, in making "peace through the blood of His cross" to reconcile all things to Himself and ultimately to God, made peace between the Jew and the Gentile by making the two one body in Him, where "there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 1:20-22, 3:10-11 NASU).

This has NOTHING to do with the abolition of God's commandments prohibiting idolatry, murder, stealing and Sabbath-breaking, etc. These are still in force as ever, permanently written on our hearts (Ps 111:7-8; Heb. 8:10; Rom. 13:8-10). It's about Christ making Jewish and Gentile believers one body in Him through the blood of His cross SHED FOR ALL!

In this unity lies the common Sabbath heritage of Jewish and Gentile believers (see Acts 15:19-21; 1 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 4:19-11). The N.T. time is when the name of the one True, Living God will be great among the Gentiles, and He will be worshipped from one end of heaven to another:

"From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense [prayer in the N.T., Rev. 8:3-4; Ps 141:2] shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering [consecration to God in holiness and service, Rom. 12:1]: for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 1:11).

Gentile believers in Israel's Messiah are now members of "the commonwealth of Israel" and as such are full partners in God's covenant with the house of Israel whereby God's law, including the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, is inscribed on the hearts and minds of His people (Heb. 8:10-12; Rom. 2:28-29). To this covenant people, whether Jew or Gentile, belongs the external **covenant sign** of Sabbath-keeping (Ex. 31:16-17; Heb. 4:9).

In the case of the eunuch his excuse for excluding himself from the Sabbath, namely, that he's barren of hope, no longer holds. Christ is his hope (1 Pet. 1:3-4; Col. 1:27; cp Matt. 19:12). Like the Gentiles, eunuchs were once barred from the congregation of the LORD (Deut. 23:1), but now in the N.T. such is not the case. The conversion and subsequent baptism of the 'Ethiopian eunuch' by Philip is the clear proof (Acts 8:27-39).

From this proof comes the further proof that Isaiah's 'Sabbath prophecy' of chapter 56 is meant for the N.T. Messianic era and that the Sabbath must be kept in this N.T. time in which God is welcoming Gentiles and eunuchs alike into 'the commonwealth of Israel'. One cannot possibly say that the prophecy as a whole is destined for the N.T. era, and yet the call to Sabbath observance, which is at the heart of it, is not. That will be the height of intellectual dishonesty! Either the prophecy is not meant for the N.T. era at all or it's meant for it together with its call to Sabbath observance.

But nearly all Bible scholars and expositors are agreed that Isaiah 56 is intended for the N.T. Messianic Age of the Gospel. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* defines the term 'eunuch' and then relates it to "Isaiah's vision of the Messianic era":

"Eunuch – A male deprived of the testes or external genitals. Such men were excluded from serving as priests (Lev. 21:20) and from membership in the congregation of Israel (Deut. 23:1). Eunuchs were regarded as especially trustworthy in the ancient Near East and thus were frequently employed in royal service. By extension, the Hebrew word translated eunuch could be used of any court official. (Gen. 37:36 and 39:1 refer to a married man). The Greek term translated eunuch is literally 'one in charge of a bed', a reference to the practice of using eunuchs as keepers of harems (Esther 2:3, 6, 15). Part of Isaiah's vision of the Messianic era was a picture of the eunuch no longer complaining of being 'a dry tree', one without hope of descendants, because God would reward the faithful eunuch with a lasting monument and name in the temple which would be better than sons or daughters (Isa. 56:5). Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8:27 was reading from Isaiah's scroll" (p. 5:17).

The prophecy was spot on: Eunuchs would be accepted into "the congregation of the LORD" (the Church), and Philip had the honour of baptizing the first eunuch to fulfill the prophecy—the Ethiopian eunuch! Now, would this Christian eunuch keep the Sabbath? He would no doubt read from Isaiah (which, in fact, he was reading when Philip approached him) that the same prophecy that foretold his admission into the "*ekklesia*" also commands him to keep the Sabbath which the early Church also kept (Acts 13:42, 44, 17:2, 16:13). It's generally believed that it was this Ethiopian eunuch who started the Christian Church in Ethiopia which observed the seventh-day Sabbath from its earliest history well into the 1970s. The *African Encyclopedia* reports:

"Ethiopian Christians generally practise circumcision. There are also religious rules concerning food. Ethiopian Christians observe Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath) as well as Sunday as holy days of worship. The observation of Saturday is now being neglected" (Art. "Ethiopian Church", pp. 194-195, Oxford University Press 1974).

### **Divine Promise of Reward for Sabbath Observance in the New Testament**

The Promise-Giver identifies Himself: He's God Almighty (hence "Thus saith the LORD", v. 4). He is the One whose promise doesn't fail (Rom. 4:21; 1 Thess. 5:24; Heb. 10:23). Here, He describes the Sabbath as one of "the things that please" Him. Moreover, He calls the Sabbath His 'covenant' which His faithful people "take hold of" (v. 4b, 6; see Ex. 31:16-17; Ez. 20:12).

In analyzing the reward of blessing promised faithful N.T. Sabbath-keepers, we see that it elaborates on the Divine 'blessing' pronounced earlier in verse 2: "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it".

“Blessed is the man”, in turn, refers back to God’s “righteousness” (vindication) to be revealed on the day of His “salvation” (v. 1).

The reward of blessing given to believing Sabbath-keeping eunuch is this: “unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off” (v.5).

The terms “Mine house and within My walls” refer to God’s Church described as “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15; cp Eph. 2:19-21). That eunuchs have “a place” in the house of the Living God shows that the previous order forbidding them from membership in “the Assembly of the LORD” (Deut. 23:1) has been completely reversed under the New Covenant. On top, they have “a better name than of sons and daughters” in the LORD’s house.

This aspect of the promised reward is meant as God’s superior solution to the childlessness of eunuchs. He gives them a “better name” than one from one’s biological children who preserve a parent’s name in this life after his/her physical demise, because the Sabbath-keeping eunuchs preserve their own name in perpetuity in God’s everlasting Kingdom in the world to come. They enjoy “an everlasting name” or eternal life. And that’s surely a “better name”!

Christ makes a similar promise to the church in Philadelphia in Rev. 3:12: “He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the Name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and mine own new name” (RV).

Like eunuchs, Sabbath-keeping Gentile believers have fully-fledged status as “fellow-citizens with the [Jewish] saints” (Eph. 2:19) in God’s house depicted as a “holy mountain”. Here’s God’s solemn promise to them:

“Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant;

“Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people [i.e. all nations, NET]” (vv. 6-7).

That this takes place in the N.T. era of the end-time is further corroborated by another prophecy of the same prophet Isaiah in which “all nations” *stream* to “the[elevated] mountain of the LORD’s house” in “the last days” for instruction in God’s law:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-3).

As already pointed out, “the mountain of the LORD’s house” is the true Church which welcomes all nationalities to “the house of the God of Jacob” on the basis of their faith in Israel’s Messiah (Matt. 2:1-2; Luke 1:31-33; cp John 19:19-22) to be instructed in God’s law containing His will. This



“mountain of the LORD’s house” is “holy” (Eph. 5:27) and is affectionately called “Zion”. This is where all true believers, both Jews and Gentiles, have come:

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to *the* city of *the* living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,  
“to the *general* assembly and church of the first-born who are written in Heaven, and to God *the* Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,  
“and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24 MKJV).

This is the greatest, most glorious family in the universe! We are in a divine, spiritual fellowship with God and His Son Jesus and His angels in the heavenly Jerusalem; and we are in fellowship with fellow believers of all nationalities constituting the universal “church of the first-born” in a redeeming fellowship in which we are sprinkled clean from all filth by the blood of Jesus, “the Mediator of the New Covenant”.

On this holy Mount of Zion, God says He will **accept** the offerings and sacrifices of Sabbath-keeping Gentile believers. The ‘offerings and sacrifices’ meant are the “spiritual sacrifices” of the New Testament spiritual priesthood, of which we read in 1 Peter 2:5: “You also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices **acceptable** to God through Jesus Christ” (MKJV).

“The spiritual sacrifices” of the N.T. holy priesthood, made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers, consist of the following: the *sacrifice* of the body to God in holy living and service (Rom. 12:1), the *sacrifice* of praise to God (Heb. 13:15), the *sacrifice* of good works (Heb. 13:16), and the *sacrifice* of our substance in support of God’s work (Phil. 4:18; Luke 8:3).

Taking the long view, “the holy mountain” of God also refers ultimately to the Kingdom of God which comes as “a great mountain which fills the whole earth” in the Millennium (Dan. 3:35; cp Rev. 21:10). The Kingdom of God “fills the whole earth” in the sense that it will replace all worldly kingdoms (Dan. 2:44-45). During this glorious 1000-year rule of Christ with His saints (Rev. 5:10, 20:4-6), formal worship on the Sabbath will take place in the millennial Temple in Jerusalem (Isa. 66:22-23; Zech. 14:16-17; Ps 68:29; Mal. 3:2).

Does this seem like the Sabbath has been cancelled or done away with? The truth of the matter is that “a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9) now, and in the Millennium, and for all time in the Eternal Kingdom!

### A Tale of Two Gatherings

Two gatherings are in view: In (re)gathering “the outcasts of [national] Israel”, God will gather “others [of Gentile extraction] to him [Jacob]” besides Israel’s own (v. 8). We read in Romans chapter 9:

“As indeed He says in Hosea, ‘Those who were not My people I will call ‘My people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved’.

“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God’” (vv. 25-26 ESV).

The Gentiles gathered to the Israel on the basis of faith in Israel's Messiah share in God's covenant with the house of Israel (Heb. 8:10-12, 10:16-18). This, of course, includes the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, a sign between God and His people Israel forever.

### The Evidence of Scripture and History

Christ Himself set the tone for Christian Sabbath-keeping with His emphasis on acts of kindness and purity of observance as God commanded. The testimony of the Gospels is that He was a habitual Sabbath keeper: "And he came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, **as His custom [Grk 'etho' custom, manner] was**, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read "(Luke 4:16).

The recorded incidents of disagreement He had with the Pharisees over the Sabbath were not because Jesus advocated the breaking of the Sabbath while the Pharisees affirmed it. The conflicts were over "the extensive traditional regulations" **added** to God's original Sabbath law by 'the scribes and Pharisees' regarding how the Sabbath ought to be observed. This body of "extensive traditional regulations" was known as "the oral Law" (*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 454, InterVarsity Press, 1992).

The Gospels record six separate incidents of the disagreements Jesus had with the Pharisees over the Sabbath (in Matt. 12:1-8, par. Mk 2:23-28 & Luke 6:1-5; Matt. 12:9-14, par. Mk 3:1-6 & Luke 6:6-11; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-6; John 5:2-47; John 9:1-41), and none of the activities, on account of which the Pharisees accused Christ of Sabbath-breaking, constituted a violation of God's Sabbath law.

The first incident was when the disciples of Christ, to satisfy their hunger, plucked ears of standing corn on the Sabbath day for which the Pharisees accused them of violating the Sabbath. The subsequent five incidents belong to a common category: Jesus' healing of the sick on the Sabbath. In all the incidents, the common defence of Jesus was that humanitarian deeds designed to preserve life and relieve suffering did not violate the Sabbath.

In the first incident, for example, Christ justified His disciples' action by citing how David and his men, in a time of extreme exigency, ate the showbread which was "unlawful" for them to eat, being for the priests only (Lev. 24:9; 1 Sam. 21:1-6), to conclude that the Pharisees erred in 'condemning the guiltless' (Matt. 12:7). In reaching this conclusion, Jesus linked it to the fact that priests doing the service of God in the temple on the Sabbath are also guiltless of Sabbath breaking, even though some of their activities, like the sacrifices (Num. 28:9-10), might be considered 'work'. Thus another way in which the Sabbath, a day of rest and worship (Lev. 23:3; Neh. 8:1-10; Acts 13:14-15), is not broken is when our activities, duly sanctioned by God, are connected with divine service. (Compare John 7:22-24, 5:17).

On another occasion, Jesus asked the Pharisees as they observed Him to see if He would heal a sick man on the Sabbath:

"Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" But they held their peace.

"And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other" (Mark 3:4-5).

It was on this occasion that Christ made the statement recorded in Matt. 12:12: "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day" (Matt. 12:12). This beautiful statement largely defines Christ's Sabbath worldview.

Evidently, the Pharisees were been hypocritical. If they, on the Sabbath, relieved their domestic animals, who also share in the Sabbath rest (Ex.20:10), of hunger and other forms of distress (Luke 14:1-6), what stopped Jesus from healing sick people made in God's image on the Sabbath day? This was the question the Lord put to the synagogue president in the incident in Luke 13:10ff when the latter challenged His healing of the woman in the "bond" of "a spirit of infirmity" for 18 years:

"The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou* hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or *his* ass from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering?

"And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?

"And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him" (Luke 13:15-17).

Here, the point of comparison is the 'untying' of both— of course, the greater urgency is that of 'untying' a human being in suffering or in danger, as Jesus demonstrated in the life of the poor woman: "Woman, thou art LOOSED from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands upon her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God" (vv. 12-13).

Clearly, then, Jesus was not against the Sabbath but taught, by word and personal example, that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath", just as it's lawful to perform a spiritual (priestly or ministerial) duty on the Sabbath. Christ upheld the sanctity of the seventh-day Sabbath and expected His followers to uphold it to the end.

In answering His disciples' questions about "the sign of His coming and of the end of the world", Christ gave several signs, among them the rise of religious deceivers and a high frequency of calamities, and indicated that these trends would climax in His second coming (Matt. 24). But just before His return, He warned, the antichrist would make His appearance in the (rebuilt) Jerusalem temple (vv. 15; cp 2 Thess. 2:2-4) whereupon the disciples are to "flee" (v. 16-19). But then, they are to pray that their flight do not occur "in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day" (v. 20) during this time of the "great tribulation" (v. 21; cp Rev. 7:14; Dan. 12:1).

Although this prophecy had a partial fulfillment in 66 AD when the early Jewish Christians, in anticipation of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD, fled to Pella in Jordan, we yet await its fulfillment in its full breadth evidenced by the return of Christ. In any case, neither date disproves the fact that Christ expects His followers to observe the seventh-day Sabbath after His death, resurrection and ascension. Considering that the year 70 AD is some 40 years after the ascension of Christ, it's remarkable that Jesus would tell His disciples to pray against fleeing on the Sabbath if they would not be keeping the Sabbath by this time, in the post-Resurrection era.

As in 70 AD, just as "winter" and Sabbath-keeping remained true, so will both be during the last rule of the antichrist which immediately precedes the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the ascension of the saints (Matt. 24:29-31). If you ever doubted Christ's position on the Sabbath, here's the strongest indication yet that He did not come to undermine the Sabbath but to "magnify it and make it honourable" like the rest of God's commandments (Isa. 42:21).

And His immediate followers followed suit. His faithful women disciples did not abandon or relax their observance of the Sabbath, even though their Lord lay dead in a sepulchre: "And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body

was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:55-56).

Writing in about 60 AD or 63 AD, some thirty years after the formal inauguration of the Church on the day of Pentecost, Luke still acknowledged the Sabbath as a divine commandment. In the Book of Acts, he recorded more of such Sabbath observance by Paul and other early believers as a matter of course.

In the book *A History of the Sabbath and Sunday*, author John Kiesz writes under the heading "History of the Sabbath in the Acts of the Apostles":

"The Book of Acts is the inspired source of apostolic church history. Therein we find that every congregation was founded by Sabbath-keeping apostolic missionaries. That the apostolic church did observe the Sabbath, as well as all other precepts of the Law, admits of no doubt. The early Christians were not accused of violating the Sabbath. Acts, from the tenth chapter forward, is not the history of the Jewish converts only, but largely of Gentiles as well.

"The thread of Sabbath history in the apostolic church is found mainly in the record of Paul's missionary labors. In his first journey, with his companion Barnabas, Paul came to Antioch in Pisidia, in A.D. 45, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. By invitation of the leaders, Paul delivered a message, proving that Jesus (Yahshua) is the Messiah. Of what followed immediately upon the conclusion of the service, we read:

'And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

'Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

'And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God' (Acts 13:42-44).

"Here would have been a remarkable opportunity to mention that the Sabbath had been changed, and that Paul would preach to them the next day, Sunday. But this was not the case. There was a continued and habitual recognition and observance of the Sabbath by both the Jewish and Gentile worshippers.

"About A.D. 51, the apostles assembled at Jerusalem to consider the question of circumcision. This was a subject apart from the Ten Commandment Law [1 Cor. 7:19]. Their decision was:

'Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

'But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood [which are unclean food].

'For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day" (Acts 15:19-21).

"The reason for the proposed course was that the newly converted Gentiles could hear the preaching and receive further instructions in the synagogues "every Sabbath day". In other words, the Gentiles did attend services on the seventh day of the week at that time" (pp. 11-12).

To cut a long story short, the early Christians were dyed-in-the wool Sabbath keepers and fulfilled that obligation wherever they found themselves. One time when the Apostle Paul visited Philippi and found no synagogue in which worship on the Sabbath, he went out to "the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer", and spoke to the women who came there. It was on this

occasion that the Lord opened the heart of one of the women, Lydia, to heed Paul's message leading to her conversion and baptism (Acts 16:12-15 *ESV*).

At another time, the same Apostle Paul spent one-half years in Corinth and observed the Sabbath during his entire stay there—a total of 84 Sabbaths! (Acts 18:1-4, 11). Like Christ His Master, it was Paul's "manner" to observe the Sabbath every week (Acts 17:2; cp 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 John 2:6).

The reference by some to 1 Cor. 16:2 and others as sanctioning Sunday as 'the Lord's day' are, in reality, 'desperate' attempts to find scriptural support for a practice which has no scriptural basis. Rather than making the first day of the week, our Sunday, a day of rest and worship, the Apostle Paul instructed the brethren to spend the day in the hard work of storing up provisions for "the poor saints at Jerusalem" as he had earlier instructed the Assemblies in Galatia:

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

"And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

"And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me" (1 Cor. 16:1-4).

This was not a collection of money but relief supplies, especially foodstuff, for the poor, starving saints at Jerusalem, then in the grip of a famine (Acts 11:28-30), and to whom the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia also sent aid (or "fruit") (Rom. 15:25-28). That's why it required a number of people to carry their "liberality unto Jerusalem" as made clearer in the *English Standard Version*: "And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem" (see 2 Cor. 8:19).

It's this band of gift-bearers that we come upon in Acts 20:4 in the company of Paul, en route to Jerusalem (see Acts 21:15-17, 24:17). Interestingly, we find another "first day" mention in connection with these gifts to "the poor saints at Jerusalem". During a stop-over in Troas (v. 6), it is reported that "upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (v. 7).

Like 1 Cor. 16:2, this scripture is also quoted by some as scriptural proof of Sunday observance by the early Christians. But it has all the internal evidence that it was a meeting held in the evening as "There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered" (v. 8 *ESV*). This is the period we call Saturday evening, which follows the Sabbath after it ends at sunset. As in 1 Cor. 16:2, this period is rendered in the original Greek as "the first of the Sabbaths [i.e. sabbaton]", as the *Literal Translation of the Bible (LITV)* faithfully translates it and *Today's English Version (TEV)* correctly renders it in modern English: "On Saturday evening we gathered together for the fellowship meal. Paul spoke to the people, and kept on speaking until midnight, since he was going to leave the next day".

"The next day" was Sunday proper, being **the light part** of the first day of the week which had begun with the going down of the sun the previous day, the seventh day of the week, in accordance with Bible time (Gen. 1:5; Lev. 23:32). As further evidence that the early Christians regarded Sunday as an ordinary working day, we see Paul set off on foot for Assos on Sunday morning, after speaking all night till daybreak! (vv. 11-14). He walked a distance of 19 miles!

Someone may ask, but what about Col. 2:16? Doesn't it invalidate the Sabbath? "The holyday and sabbaths" under discussion do not relate to the seventh day Sabbath of the Ten Commandments but to the ceremonial yearly sabbaths or holydays on which drink and food offerings were made. They are classified as "a shadow" (v. 17) together with the law of animal sacrifices which pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:1-4). The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary correctly comments:

**"the sabbath** — Omit "THE," which is not in the *Greek* (compare *Note*, see on [Gal 4:10](#)). "SABBATHS" (not "the sabbaths") of the day of atonement and feast of tabernacles have come to an end with the Jewish services to which they belonged ([Lev 23:32](#), [Lev 23:37-39](#)). The weekly sabbath rests on a more permanent foundation, having been instituted in Paradise to commemorate the completion of creation in six days. [Lev 23:38](#) expressly distinguished "the sabbath of the Lord" from the other sabbaths. A *positive* precept is *right because it is commanded*, and ceases to be obligatory when abrogated; a moral precept is *commanded* eternally, *because it is eternally right*. If we could keep a perpetual sabbath, as we shall hereafter, the positive precept of the sabbath, one in each week, would not be needed. [Hebrews 4:9, "rests", *Greek*, "keeping of Sabbath (Isa. 66:23)]. But we cannot, since even Adam, in innocence, needed one amidst his earthly employments; therefore the sabbath is still needed and is therefore still linked with the other nine commandments" (p. 1322).

Yes, the Sabbath is still a valid part of God's Ten Commandments, the violation of which, like any of the other commandments, is violation of all (Jam. 2:10-12). Let no one deceive you. There is not a scintilla of scriptural evidence that Christ or His apostles changed the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week to Sunday, the first day of the week. Instead, what we discover is that they were all faithful, avid Sabbath-keepers.

Under the heading "The Nazarenes" Bernard R. Young writes of the early Jewish believers: "They still kept to their ordinary Jewish worship in the synagogues and at the Temple. The main difference was their belief that the MESSIAH HAD COME; other Jews were still expecting Him. They observed the Jewish Sabbath (our Saturday) as a day of rest..." (p. 16).

No wonder, the elders of the Jerusalem apostolic Jewish Church said to Paul when he went to greet them on concluding his third missionary journey spent in preaching and planting churches among the Gentiles: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous of the Law" (Acts 21:20 MKJV). The *New English Translation (NET)* renders the clause "and they are all zealous of the Law" as "and they are all ardent observers of the law".

Being the true 'Mother Church, the Jerusalem Church, labeled by unbelieving Jews as "the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5), became the model church for all the Gentile churches:

"The first Christian church established at Jerusalem by apostolic authority became in its doctrine and practice a model for the greater part of those founded in the first century. ... These Judaizing Christians were first known by the outside world as 'Nazarenes'. ... All Christians agreed in celebrating the seventh day of the week in conformity to the Jewish converts" (Hugh Smith, *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 50, 51, 69. Emphasis mine).

This is the TRUE history of the Christian Church. All the Gentile assemblies followed the Jerusalem Jewish Church in doctrine and practice, a fact easily verifiable from the following scriptures: Acts 15:27-33, 16:4-5; 1 Thess. 2:14; Rom. 1:16; Acts 20:21; 26:20; 24:14.

For nearly three hundred years, the Church held to the pure doctrine, including the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, as taught by the original Jewish apostles of Messiah Yahshua, though

already an insidious assault had been launched against “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3) by some of the Gentile converts in their attempt to accommodate some of their old pagan beliefs:

“This tendency on the part of the [Gentile] Christians to meet paganism half way was very early developed. Upright men tried to stem the tide; but despite all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the church, except a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan Superstition” (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 93).

“Before the second century was half gone, before the last of the apostles had been dead forty years, this apostate, this working of the ‘Mystery of Iniquity’ [2 Thess. 2:7; cp Acts 20:29-31], had so largely spread over the east and west [of the Roman Empire], that it is literally true, that a large part of the Christian observances and institutions, even in this century, had the aspect of the pagan mysteries” (Mosheim, in *Ecclesiastical History*, Century 2, Part 2, Chapter 4, Paragraph 1).

However, “The ancient church known as the ‘Nazarenes’, to which we referred to earlier, did not die out for a long time. In fact, there never was a time since apostolic days that there have not been Sabbath-keepers. Being stigmatized as ‘Judaizers’, they have also been known over the centuries by many other designations, such as: Nazarenes, Cerinthians, Hypsistari, Vadois, Cathari, Toulousians, Petrobrussians, Passagians, Waldenses, etc. Much of their history has been destroyed, and what we do have left of them, in many instances, was written by their enemies, and naturally was much distorted” (*A History of the Sabbath and Sunday*, p. 17).

In Ethiopia and elsewhere, the doctrinal influences and beliefs of the early Apostolic Christian Church of Jerusalem persisted, and “Several historians indicate that for a long time the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) Christians were almost entirely shut out from the [apostate] church of Europe. During the seventeenth century repeated and violent attempts were unsuccessfully made by the Jesuits, under the patronage of Portugal, to convert or subdue them. It is claimed by some, and by the Ethiopians themselves, that the gospel was brought to them by the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), together with the teaching of the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. As A.H. Newman says of them: ‘Fasting periods are very numerous and about half of the days of the year, including the Jewish Sabbath and Sunday, are religiously observed. Indications of Jewish influence, besides Sabbath observance, are the practice of circumcision, and distinction between clean and unclean animals, etc.’” (ibid. p.25).

Sunday gradually came to rival and eventually overshadow the seventh-day Sabbath as a day of worship in the Christian Church (now largely Gentile) as the handiwork of the antichristian power that rose to prominence in the Church in the third century AD. This power, then embodied in Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, condemned the status quo: “Let us have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries. ...” (ibid., Constantine at the Council of Nicaea 325 AD).

And he meant every word of it. In 321 AD, he had issued his famous ‘Sunday law’:

“Let the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades, rest on THE VENERABLE DAY OF THE SUN; but let those who are situated in the country, freely and at full liberty, attend to the business of agriculture because it often happens that no other day is fit for sowing corn and planting vines lest the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted by heaven” (*Corpus Juris Civilis* Cod. Liv. 3, Tit. 12; 30, Quoted in *A History of the Sabbath and Sunday* by John Kiesz, p. 49, capitals mine).

Because true believers **continued** to observe the Biblical Sabbath after Constantine’s Sunday law in 321 A.D., the Catholic Church made further legislation in the matter of Sunday observance at the

Council of Laodicea in 364 A.D, outlawing the Sabbath in favour of Sunday: "Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath [i.e. Saturday], but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord's Day [supposedly Sunday], resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizing, let him be anathema [accursed] from Christ" (*A History of the Church Councils* by Charles J. Hefele, Vol. II, p. 316).

While God tells us to call the seventh-day Sabbath "a delight, holy of the LORD", man damns all those who observe it in obedience to the God of Creation who "blessed" it and "sanctified" it [i.e. made it holy or set it apart]" for all mankind at creation (Gen. 2:2-3; Heb. 4:4). The change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday has no divine sanction; it's the work of the "man of sin" described by Daniel as "the little horn" of the fourth beast (kingdom) of Rome (Dan. 7:8, 21, 23-24). This "little horn" power "will think to change [Yahweh's] times and laws" (v. 25), and obviously the Sabbath is a victim.

But, beloved believer, "let God be true and every man [who opposes His truth] a liar" (Rom. 3:4). Like the early Apostles, you must obey God rather than man if you wish to enjoy the eternal blessings of the Almighty (Acts 5:29).

### **The Sabbath Remains for the People of God**

The Sabbath remains valid with its blessings, even as the scripture says: "the promise of entering His rest still stands", therefore, "let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it" (Heb. 4:1 *ESV*). How do you enter this rest? Verses 9-11 shows how:

"There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His [when He rested on the seventh day from all His works in Gen. 2:2-3]. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience [shown by some of the Israelites when they disobeyed God's Sabbath law].

The observance of the Sabbath is the 'test' of all obedience to God. If you fail in it, you have practically failed all. It is the only commandment that redounds exclusively to God's honour , as its main object is to commemorate the fact that "in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (v. 11). The keeping of the Sabbath, therefore, is an acknowledgment of God as the Creator of all things, including you.

Not surprisingly, the Sabbath is most dear to His heart. As He promised to rain down manna for the Israelites, He said to them:

"Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may **test** them, whether they will walk in My law or not'.

"On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily (Ex. 16:4-5 *ESV*).

Notice what God said when some of the Israelites, out of disobedience, went out to gather manna on the seventh day:

"And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?' "See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day He gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day" (vv. 28-29 *ESV*).



The failure to observe the Sabbath commandment was deemed by God as a *refusal* to keep all His “commandments and laws”. Don’t fall into a similar trap of disobedience. The Word of God, of which the Sabbath, is part, is “living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:9-12); it does not spare transgressors (Isa. 1:20; cp John 12:48; Rev. 19:15).

So “strive” (*LITV* ‘exert yourself’, *NIV* ‘make every effort’) to enter “the narrow gate” of Sabbath rest in emulation of God, your Heavenly Father (Heb. 4:11; Matt. 7:13-14; Eph. 5:1). This is the “old path” which gives rest to the soul, though many decline to walk in it (Jer. 16:6).

Be one of the obedient few then. It will not be easy in a hostile Sabbath world, but do “exert” yourself to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy in honour of God. Friends and family may despise you and call you names; your boss may even threaten you with dismissal, but do “exert” yourself, and “the God of all grace” will empower you to keep it (1 Pet. 5:10; Phil. 4:13; Tit. 2:11). He never fails! Prepare for the Sabbath each Friday (the sixth day) of the week. Have your Sabbath meal bought and prepared on this day (Ex. 16:23-26, 35:3), making sure all your commercial, secular activities cease by sunset (Neh. 10:31, 13:15-21; cp Jer. 17:19-27). Then enter into “the joy of the LORD” on His Holy Sabbath day (Neh. 8:9-10; Ps 118:24, 99:9), resting and worshipping His Holy Name. Your soul will be filled with goodness, and you will be spiritually energized to face the incoming week.

The LORD regards the Sabbath as so vital a part of His revealed will that He inspired the prophet Isaiah to prophesy that you must keep it in this end time “when His salvation is near to come and His righteousness about to be revealed”. And it comes with a package of blessings you can’t find anywhere else—*except by keeping God’s Sabbath day Holy!*

The book of Hebrews distinctly affirms: “There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God”. The question is, are you part of “the people of God”? If so, then the Sabbath is for you. Don’t make the stale old excuse that ‘the Sabbath is for the Jews’ when God says you shouldn’t say so: “Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD speak, saying, ‘The LORD has utterly separated me from His people’” (Isa. 56:3 *NKJV*).

Yet this is the standard excuse of all Gentile Christians who do not keep the Sabbath. Against God’s express will, they do not see themselves as members of the House of Israel with whom God has made His New Covenant and, therefore, see no need to observe the Sabbath.

In the light of all the positive affirmations God has made about His Sabbath, what is the standing of such Gentile Christians with God? Is God pleased with them, when He says Sabbath observance is a thing which “pleases” Him? (v. 4). Will He accept their “spiritual sacrifices”?

Beloved, don’t spurn the Sabbath as others do. Delight in it, and God will delight in you (Isa. 58:13-14; cp Ps 37:4; Job 22:22-28). Treat every seventh day as ‘holy time’ set apart for God, and He will treat you the same—He will set you apart to Himself (Ez. 20:12). Don’t miss out on the blessings of God’s Holy Sabbath. Keep it holy, as our Master and all the early Christians did, for “His salvation is near to come and His righteousness about to be revealed”. God help us all to keep His “Holy Day” in Jesus’ Name. Amen!

For more further enlightenment on the Sabbath and other truths of salvation, contact:

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